

105TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. RES. 470

To express the sense of the House of Representatives regarding actions to stop the poaching of valuable marine resources and use of illegal high seas driftnets in the Bering Sea.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JUNE 15, 1998

Mr. YOUNG of Alaska submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Resources

RESOLUTION

To express the sense of the House of Representatives regarding actions to stop the poaching of valuable marine resources and use of illegal high seas driftnets in the Bering Sea.

Whereas the number of vessels detected using illegal high seas driftnets has been increasing in recent years;

Whereas salmon fishermen fishing off the coast of Alaska in 1997 noticed an unusual number of net-marked fish returning to their spawning streams;

Whereas United States and Russian fisheries enforcement personnel have intercepted and seized fishing vessels fishing illegally in United States and Russian waters;

Whereas United States fisheries enforcement personnel spotted as many as 5 vessels fishing with illegal gear or in territorial waters of Russia without authorization;

Whereas on May 28, 1998, United States fisheries enforcement personnel detected and pursued the Chinese-flagged vessel TAI SHENG for fishing using illegal driftnets estimated to be more than 9 miles long;

Whereas on June 1, 1998, United States fisheries enforcement personnel intercepted and boarded the Chinese-flagged vessel SHAN YU-16 for illegally using driftnets for harvesting salmon;

Whereas on May 26, 1998, fisheries enforcement personnel from the Russian Federal Border Guard Service attempted to inspect and detain a Chinese-flagged fishing vessel, ZONG LONG-37, for illegally harvesting fish using high seas driftnets within Russian waters in the Bering Sea;

Whereas the fisheries enforcement personnel of the Russian Federal Border Guard Service made repeated efforts to stop the vessel ZONG LONG-37 for inspection off the Kamchatka Peninsula and those efforts were ignored by the 26-member Chinese crew;

Whereas illegal fishing practices have occurred in the strait separating Russia and the People's Republic of China on many occasions, causing the irreplaceable loss of thousands of valuable fish;

Whereas upon boarding the vessel ZONG LONG-37, the Russians seized 50 tons of illegally caught fish and confiscated nearly 60 miles of driftnet;

Whereas these driftnets, or “walls of death”, are nearly invisible, miles-long monofilament nets that are placed just

below the surface of the open seas for the purpose of entangling fish and other marine resources;

Whereas the best scientific data indicates large-scale high seas driftnets have incidentally killed thousands of endangered sea turtles, hundreds of thousands of marine mammals, and millions of nontargeted fisheries;

Whereas high seas driftnets have been banned on a global basis since June 30, 1992, with the adoption of United Nations Resolution 44–225; and

Whereas the Russian Foreign Ministry has stated that the actions of their border guards were fully justified in light of the “clear infringements of the economic regime and illegal poaching”: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That it is the sense of the House of Rep-
2 resentatives that—

3 (1) the United States and Russian fisheries en-
4 forcement agencies and personnel should be com-
5 mended for maintaining an enforcement presence in
6 the Bering Sea, and for taking the necessary action
7 to stop the poaching of valuable marine resources
8 and use of illegal high seas driftnets in the Bering
9 Sea; and

10 (2) this action will send a strong signal to the
11 fishermen of the People’s Republic of China and
12 other nations that the illegal use of high seas
13 driftnets will not be tolerated and must stop.

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